

**Virginia Commission for the Arts
June 16-17, 2009
Minutes
Charlotte Hotel, Onancock**

Members Present: Dr. Lucius Ellsworth, Chair; David Briggs, Nick Covatta, Gwen Everett, Susan Hirschbiel, Evelia Gonzalez Porto, Ann Edwards Rust, Jackie Stone, Will Trinkle, Deborah Valentine, Vaughan Webb, and Deborah Wyld

Members Absent: Maria Laqueur

Staff Present: Peggy Baggett, Foster Billingsley, Elizabeth Cantile, and Cathy Welborn

Introduction

Lu Ellsworth, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. He expressed appreciation to Arts Enter Cape Charles for the luncheon on the previous day and to the North Street Playhouse for the performance and reception on the previous evening.

David Briggs made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2009, meeting. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Virginia Symphony

Peggy Baggett introduced Carla Johnson, Executive Director of the Virginia Symphony. Ms Johnson gave an update on the financial situation of the Symphony and on plans for next season.

2009-2010 Grants Budget

Peggy Baggett reviewed the draft 2009-2010 grants budget. She noted that there will be additional state budget cuts for 2009-2010 but that no information had been provided to state agencies on the timing or size of the reductions.

The Commission then discussed potential uses of the \$2,800 allocated for the Mill Mountain Theatre tour in 2009-2010. Deborah Valentine made a motion to split the funds between the Barter Theatre and Theatre IV to be used for performances in the Mill Mountain Theatre service area. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area I General Operating Support

Lu Ellsworth had observed the Area I panel meeting. He said that the panelists were well prepared, that they had first hand knowledge of the applicants, and that they had consensus on most of the applications.

David Briggs noted the panel recommendation that the Commission reconsider whether Theatre Bristol is eligible for funding. He said that the Commission should reevaluate its definition of a Virginia arts organization in light of the panel recommendation and of the situation with Teatro de la Luna in northern Virginia.

David Briggs made a motion to approve the staff recommendations for the General Operating Support applications from Area I with the exception of Pro Art Association. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

David Briggs then made a motion to approve the panel and staff recommendations for funding for Pro Art Association. The motion was seconded and approved with Lu Ellsworth abstaining.

Area I Project Grants

Lu Ellsworth proposed awarding \$4,500 to Emory & Henry College, \$3,000 to the City of Galax, and \$3,000 to Southwest Virginia Community College Educational Foundation. Deborah Valentine made a motion to adopt Dr. Ellsworth's suggestion. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area II General Operating Support

Vaughan Webb had observed the Area II panel meeting. He described the panelists as well prepared.

Parsons Bruce Arts Association. David Briggs made a motion to approve the staff recommendation of Priority 1 funding. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

David Briggs then made a motion to approve the panel and staff recommendations on the remaining General Operating Support applications from Area II. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area II Project Grants

David Briggs made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the Area II Project Grants. The motion was seconded. Vaughan Webb noted that the Community Partnership for Revitalization should be told that future applications must be for a specific project rather than support of the ongoing music series. The motion was approved unanimously.

Area III General Operating Support

Rockingham Ballet Theatre. David Briggs agreed with the panel comments about this applicant but noted that there had apparently been little change in the organization since the last review by the panel. He made a motion to approve Priority 2 funding with a requirement that the organization apply next year with the long form to be reviewed by the panel again. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Staunton Augusta Arts Center. Peggy Baggett noted that this organization is

experiencing financial problems and recommended that the Commission request an update on the financial situation before sending the grant award letter. The Commissioners agreed with this recommendation by consensus.

David Briggs made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining General Operating Support applications from Area III. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area III Project Grants

Price's Fork Elementary School. Evelia Porto noted that a significant portion of the budget for this project was for documentation rather than the creation of the quilt for the school. David Briggs made a motion to award \$3,500 for the project with the condition that the Commission funds be spent on the artist's fee and supplies. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

David Briggs made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining Project Grants from Area III. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area IVA General Operating Support

Gwen Everett and David Briggs had observed portions of the Area IVA panel meeting. Gwen Everett commented that the panelists were well informed and had done extensive research prior to the meeting. David Briggs concurred, noting that the panelists had considerable first hand knowledge of the applicants.

Council for the Arts of Herndon. Deborah Valentine noted that the organization did not appear to be addressing concerns expressed by the panelists and by the Commission. Nick Covatta pointed out that if the Commission approved the panel recommendation, it would be the third year of Priority 3 funding with no evidence of change by the organization. David Briggs made a motion not to fund the Council for the Arts of Herndon. The motion was seconded and approved with Gwen Everett and Ann Edwards Rust abstaining.

Arts Council of Fairfax County. David Briggs made a motion to approve the panel and staff recommendations on funding for the Arts Council of Fairfax County. The motion was seconded and approved with Gwen Everett and Ann Edwards Rust abstaining.

Bowen McCauley Dance. Will Trinkle made a motion to approve the panel and staff recommendations on funding for Bowen McCauley Dance. The motion was seconded and approved with David Briggs abstaining.

Synetic Theatre. Will Trinkle made a motion to approve the panel and staff recommendations on funding for Synetic Theatre. The motion was seconded and approved with David Briggs abstaining.

David Briggs made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining General Operating Support applications from Area IVA. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area IVA Project Grants

Firebelly Productions. Cathy Welborn pointed out that after the advisory panel meeting the organization had proposed a major change in the project. Lu Ellsworth noted that the materials from the applicant seemed to indicate that the proposed director would be getting graduate school credit for directing the production and questioned whether the project would be eligible under the Commission guidelines. Deborah Valentine made a motion to turn down the request for funding. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Initiative for Public Art - Reston. Vaughan Webb made a motion to approve the staff recommendation for funding. The motion was seconded and approved with Ann Edwards Rust abstaining.

Nick Covatta made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining Project Grant applications from Area IVA. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area IVB General Operating Support

David Briggs had observed a portion of the panel meeting. He said that the large geographic area meant that the panelists were not familiar with the parts of the region outside of their home bases.

Chateauville Foundation. The Commissioners discussed the outstanding artistic quality of the performances presented on the property. They stated that the Chateauville Foundation is a valuable resource for the area but that it is not clear how extensively the concerts are marketed in the local community. After discussion Deborah Valentine made a motion to make a Special Recognition Award of \$5,000. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Gray Ghost Theatre Company. Cathy Welborn presented the updated plan of activities for the year, received after the panel meeting. The Commissioners stated that the organization does not meet the eligibility standard of presenting three different arts events for the public. David Briggs made a motion to award no funding. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Susan Hirschbiel made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining General Operating Support applications from Area IVB. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area IVB Project Grants

Ann Edwards Rust made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the Project Grants from Area IVB. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area V General Operating Support

Arts Council of Richmond. Will Trinkle made a motion to approve the staff recommendation on funding for the Arts Council of Richmond. The motion was seconded and

approved with Jackie Stone abstaining.

Petersburg Symphony. Evelia Gonzalez Porto talked about the importance of the Symphony to the Petersburg community and noted that the concerts have full capacity audiences. David Briggs made a motion to award Priority 1 funding with the organization being required to use the long form application and to be reviewed by the panel again next year. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

David Briggs made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining General Operating Support applications from Area V. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area V Project Grants

Appomattox Regional Governor's School (10-0119). Evelia Gonzalez Porto questioned the need for transportation to the Richmond Ballet studios for dance classes since there is a dance studio at the Governor's School. Ann Edwards Rust made a motion to approve the staff recommendation for funding. The motion was seconded and approved, 10-Yes, 1-No.

Rockfish Valley Community Center. Noting that the applicant was requesting support for the fourth year in a row for the same project, Ann Edwards Rust made a motion not to fund the application. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Susan Hirschbiel made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining Project Grant applications from Area V. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area VI General Operating Support

Susan Hirschbiel had observed the panel meeting and stated that it was the strongest panel that she had observed in her term on the Commission. She described the panelists as well prepared and noted that they had done extensive research on the applicants. She expressed concern about the number of applications that were poorly written. She noted that Cathy Welborn spends a great deal of time with some of the applicants and wondered if this intensive assistance is the best use of Commission staff time. Deborah Wyld, who had also observed the panel meeting, agreed that there were many poorly prepared applications from long-time Commission grantees. She expressed appreciation to the panelists for making phone calls and doing research beyond reading the applications.

Community Alliance for the Performing Arts. Susan Hirschbiel stated that this organization had shown no improvement on issues raised by the panelists in past years. She made a motion to approve Priority 3 funding. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Eastern Shore's Own. Nick Covatta pointed out the enormous support from the community for this organization. He noted the long history of the organization and expressed sympathy for the situation involving fraud by a former employee. He made a motion to approve Priority 1 funding with the organization being required to fill out the long form and be reviewed by the advisory panel again next year. He also directed the Commission staff to get information

on the results of the fraud investigation. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Hampton Roads Men's Chorus. Cathy Welborn explained the confusion about the number of different programs for the public. David Briggs made a motion that this organization is ineligible for funding under the Commission guidelines. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Southeastern Virginia Arts Association. Susan Hirschbiel praised the educational programs of this organization. She noted that if the organization does not find a venue for its major festival, it will likely go out of business. She made a motion to award Priority 3 funding, contingent upon the Commission being notified that a venue has been secured for the Afr' am Festival in the fall and that the summer workshops will take place. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Will Trinkle made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining General Operating Support applications from Area VI. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area VI Project Grants

Eastern Virginia Brass Society. David Briggs made a motion to award \$500 for this project. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

MultiCultural Performing Arts. Deborah Wyld questioned if there is a need for two programs in Hampton Roads to teach youth to play the steel drums. David Briggs made a motion to award \$1,000 for this project. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

City of Norfolk, Seven Venues. Deborah Valentine made a motion to award \$2,500 for this project. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

David Briggs made a motion to accept the staff recommendations on the remaining Project Grant applications from Area VI. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

General Operating Support for Major Arts Institutions

Several Commissioners expressed concern about the panel recommendations of Priority 2 funding for Barksdale Theatre, the Contemporary Art Center of Virginia Beach, and Theatre IV. They noted that although the panelists had clear reasons for the recommendations, the same concerns could be expressed about other applicants who are receiving Priority 1 funding. Lu Ellsworth stated that Theatre IV in particular is clearly a Priority 1 applicant. Deborah Valentine cautioned that the Commission should not automatically assume that all of the major arts organizations are entitled to Priority 1 funding and that the panel concerns are valid. Susan Hirschbiel noted that the cap on the amount of funding that can be requested penalizes the larger organization.

After extensive discussion by the Commission of each of the applicants Nick Covatta made a motion to award Priority 1 funding to Barksdale Theatre, the Contemporary Art Center of Virginia Beach, and Theatre IV.

Signature Theatre. Will Trinkle made a motion to approve Priority 1 funding for Signature Theatre. The motion was seconded and approved with David Briggs abstaining.

Taubman Museum of Art. Will Trinkle reported on the information he had received about the financial situation of the Taubman Museum. Evelia Gonzalez Porto made a motion to approve Priority 1 funding for the Taubman Museum. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Ann Edwards Rust made a motion to approve the panel and staff recommendations of Priority 1 funding for the Barter Theatre, the Virginia Stage Company, the Visual Arts Center of Richmond, and the William King Regional Arts Center. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Virginia Symphony. There was a lengthy discussion about the Virginia Symphony in which the following points were made.

- The quality of the orchestra is excellent and JoAnn Falletta is a gifted leader.
- The Symphony is vital to the community and to the other arts organizations with which it is a partner.
- Having high caliber professional musicians living in Hampton Roads benefits the community in many ways since most of them teach and give individual or small ensemble performances in addition to their work as part of the Symphony.
- The board of directors has already made painful decisions about spending cuts.
- The Commission has been expressing concern about the long term debt and financial situation of the Symphony for many years and has put conditions on the grants since the spring of 2005.
- The Commission has requested that it be kept informed about the progress of the organization in dealing with its financial problems but receives information only sporadically.
- The Commission must be a responsible steward of the state funds entrusted to it. At some point it becomes irresponsible to continue funding organizations with little chance of survival.
- It is unfair to other arts organizations around the state that have demonstrated sound fiscal responsibility to continue sending funds to an organization that does not appear to be willing to deal with its financial problems.

Will Trinkle made a motion to approve Priority 3 funding for the Virginia Symphony with the payment schedule to be determined by the Executive Committee. The motion was seconded and passed, 9-Yes, 2-No with Susan Hirschbiel abstaining.

David Briggs made a motion to have all of the major arts organizations apply using the long form in the spring of 2010. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Susan Hirschbiel made a motion to award \$112,500 to each of the Priority 1 organizations that are at the cap for funding. The motion was seconded and after discussion, passed, 11-Yes, 1-No.

General Operating Support Short Forms

Virginia Chamber Orchestra. Will Trinkle made a motion to approve Priority 1 funding for the Virginia Chamber Orchestra. The motion was seconded and approved with David Briggs abstaining.

Latin Ballet of Virginia. Will Trinkle made a motion to approve Priority 1 funding for the Latin Ballet of Virginia. The motion was seconded and approved with Evelia Gonzalez Porto abstaining.

School for the Performing Arts in the Richmond Community. Peggy Baggett noted that there has been a significant change in staff for the organization and that the Commission had not been given any information about the impact of this change. The Commissioners agreed by consensus to hold funds for the organization but not to award a General Operating Support grant until the organization provides an update on its status to the Commission.

Virginia Arts Festival. Will Trinkle made a motion to approve Priority 1 funding for the Virginia Arts Festival. The motion was seconded and approved with Susan Hirschbiel abstaining.

Fairfax Symphony. Will Trinkle made a motion to approve Priority 1 funding for the Fairfax Symphony. The motion was seconded and approved with David Briggs abstaining.

Vaughan Webb made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining short form General Operating Support applications. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Special Recognition Awards

Blue Ridge Institute of Ferrum College. Will Trinkle made a motion to award a \$10,000 Special Recognition Award to the Blue Ridge Institute of Ferrum College. The motion was seconded and approved, 10-Yes, 1-No with Vaughan Webb abstaining.

Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts. Will Trinkle made a motion to award a \$10,000 Special Recognition Award to the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts. The motion was seconded. Ann Edwards Rust talked about the quality of work done by Wolf Trap and recommended a higher level of funding. The motion was approved, 10-Yes, 1-No with Gwen Everett abstaining.

Services to the Field

David Briggs, who had observed the panel meeting, stated that there is a great need for this grant program and that the panelists were thoughtful and well prepared. He made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the applications. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Local Government Challenge Grants

Will Trinkle made a motion to approve full funding for all of the applications. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

2010-2011 Performing Arts Tour Directory

Elegba Folklore Society. Peggy Baggett explained the complaints received about Elegba arriving late for performances. It was noted that Elegba has had similar problems in the past. The Commissioners agreed by consensus to keep Elegba in the Tour Directory for another year but to remove the ensemble if there are more complaints from sponsors.

David Briggs made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the 2010-2011 Tour Directory. The motion was seconded and passed with David Briggs abstaining on the Bowen McCauley Dance Company.

Artist Residency Grants

Gwen Everett, who had observed the panel meeting, noted that the panelists were well prepared. She reported on their concerns about the applications involving Kid Pan Alley in which there seemed to be little participation on the part of the schools in planning the residencies.

Jackie Stone made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the Artist Residency Grants. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously with the issue of Kid Pan Alley referred to the Policy Committee for further discussion.

Approval of the 2009-2010 Grants Budget

The Commission staff noted changes in the proposed grants budget resulting from Commission action on individual grant applications.

Evelia Gonzalez Porto made a motion to change the Special Recognition Award to Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts from \$10,000 to \$12,000. Ann Edwards Rust amended the motion to increase the funding to \$15,000. The motion was seconded and defeated, 5-Yes, 6-No. The Commission then voted on the original motion and defeated it, 4-Yes, 7-No.

Teacher Incentive Grant Task Force

Lu Ellsworth reported on the recommendations of the Teacher Incentive Grant Task Force. In the discussion the following points were made.

- The Commission should not abandon its support of classroom teachers, but it is time to revamp the program. These grants can make a big difference in the classroom and in the lives of children.
- It is important that the redesigned program move away from one-time projects, however wonderful, to provide some continuity.
- The redesigned program needs to have more focus on outcomes and accountability.

David Briggs made a motion to adopt the recommendations of the Task Force. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Updates

Economic Stimulus Funding. Peggy Baggett reported on the economic stimulus funding. The Commission received 108 applications requesting \$1,754,430. The Commission will make its decisions on the Virginia grants as soon as the National Council for the Arts approves the direct competitive grants.

MINDS WIDE OPEN: *Virginia Celebrates Women in the Arts*. Susan Hirschbiel reported on the MINDS WIDE OPEN initiative. The work of Neathawk, Dubuque & Packett has been outstanding. There are new ideas every day. There is an advisory committee of the current and all living former First Ladies. There will be a media event at the Executive Mansion on August 6 to announce the initiative to the public.

Virginia Heritage Awards. Vaughan Webb reported on the Virginia Heritage Awards. The winners will be selected in early September, and the presentation of the Awards will be on the opening night of the Richmond Folk Festival. He urged the Commissioners to nominate people from their regions of the state.

Workshop on Building Arts and Cultural Districts. Peggy Baggett reported on the workshop in May in Fredericksburg on building successful arts and cultural districts, co-sponsored by the Commission, the Virginia Alliance of Local Arts Agencies, the Virginia Municipal League, the Virginia Main Street Program, and the Arts and Cultural Council of Rappahannock. There were 165 people in attendance, and there is a great deal of interest across the state in creating such districts.

Recognition of Outgoing Commissioners

Lu Ellsworth recognized the Commissioners whose terms would be ending on June 30 - David Briggs, Lu Ellsworth, Susan Hirschbiel, Jackie Stone, Will Trinkle, and Deborah Valentine. Susan Hirschbiel commended Lu Ellsworth for his leadership as Chair of the Commission. Jackie Stone thanked Peggy Baggett and the Commission staff for their work. Nick Covatta thanked the outgoing Commissioners.

Peggy Baggett reviewed the major accomplishments and issues of the past five years:

- the Local Arts Agency Study Group and the addition of the contract employee to work with the local arts agencies
- the three joint conferences with the Virginia Alliance of Local Arts Agencies on public art, the arts and economic development, and arts and cultural districts
- support of Jamestown 2007
- the professional development initiative to provide convenient and low cost training in arts management issues
- sponsorship of two Creative Economy conferences in Abingdon
- two rounds of budget cuts
- the initiative to encourage the major arts organizations of the state to take a leadership role on behalf of all of the arts

- 30% budget increases in Fy 07 and FY 08
- the 2008 Governor's Awards in the Arts
- launch of MINDS WIDE OPEN: Virginia Celebrates Women in the Arts
- launch of the 2009 Virginia Heritage Awards
- the Arts Build Communities initiative in partnership with Virginians for the Arts
- partnership with the Virginia Tourism Corporation

Report on NASAA and National Arts Advocacy

Lu Ellsworth reported on the increase in the budget for the National Endowment for the Arts, which has seen a 37% increase in Federal funding since 2007. He noted the role of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies in representing the state arts agencies in Congress and with the National Endowment for the Arts. Peggy Baggett commented that the services of NASAA are invaluable. She expressed concern that NASAA has cut back on its in-person meetings as a cost-saving measure.

Virginians for the Arts

Lu Ellsworth discussed the relationship of the Commission with Virginians for the Arts. He urged both the outgoing Commissioners and those remaining on the Commission board to stay involved in Virginians for the Arts and to help keep this organization focused on its mission.

Old and New Business

Susan Hirschbiel raised the question of whether Virginia benefits from its membership in the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. Peggy Baggett reported on the new governance structure for the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. Several Commissioners commented that Virginia is currently receiving a good financial return on its investment through the annual dues but that the situation could quickly change without representation on the Mid Atlantic board of directors. Susan Hirschbiel recommended that the new Chair of the Commission create a task force to look at the benefits of Mid Atlantic membership, not only in terms of dollars spent in Virginia but also in terms of where the Mid Atlantic grants are being awarded.

Report of the Nominating Committee

Lu Ellsworth gave the report of the Nominating Committee which recommended the following slate of officers for 2009-2010:

Chair	Nick Covatta
Vice Chair	Vaughan Webb
Secretary	Deborah Wyld

Evelia Gonzalez Porto made a motion to close the nominations. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously. Deborah Valentine made a motion to approve the slate of officers proposed by the Nominating Committee. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m

